

122

GOD and the MILLIONAIRES

by Anise

Ex. Ref.

W Lou Tandy
- 1953 /

The
ABERNETHY LIBRARY

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

GOD and the MILLIONAIRES

*with best wishes
Anna Louise Strong
March 1963*

by Anise

The "Anise Ragged Verse" ran as daily commentary in the Seattle Union Record, 1918-21. Widely copied, even in other countries, it was chief cause for my invitation to Soviet Russia in 1921. The "Reds" of those days were chiefly I.W.W.'s on the West Coast, "Debs-Socialists" in the East, Non-Partisan Leaguers of the farm belt; the American Communist Party was just being born. But there have always been "Reds"; note "That New Seditious Sect", i.e., the early Christians. For we move forward through age-long struggle between what some West Coast Indians called "God and the Millionaires". There are more scientific terms for this conflict; but I use theirs as title, in deference to our first dispossessed Americans.

From over 600 verses I choose 30 as of interest today. Some detail was changed in "Thanksgiving" and "The Turn of the Year" when these were republished in 1950,

ANNA LOUISE STRONG,
November, 1951.

Published for "TODAY",

Box 161,

Montrose, California

God And The Millionaires

Into the halls of government
In Ottawa
Came Indians
From the West Coast
To complain
That they were being arrested
For catching salmon
In the river
That ran
Through their reservation.

Once
All the land was theirs,
But now
A little space
Was picked out for them
By white men,
Yet, even here,
They could not hunt nor fish
In the old manner
Because of white men's law.

Their leader spoke:
"Our Heavenly Father
Put salmon in our rivers
To feed the Red Men
Before the White Man came,
But now
White Man Millionaires,
Who can afford
Much better food than salmon,
Have come to take our fish

To make money.
Never will there be peace
Till the land
Comes back to those
Who live on it;
Till the hunting and fishing
Come back to those
Who eat the game and fish,
Even as God gave it us
From the beginning."

The Ottawa Government
Expressed SYMPATHY
For the Indians
But did nothing for them,
For God and the millionaires
Seemed to have different ideas
On disposal of salmon
And water and land;
And government inclines
To the millionaires.
But
God has a reputation
For long life
And staying qualities,
And so
In the end
This conflict
As to who owns the earth
Should come out
Differently.

Savages

I

It used to be the custom
Of certain savage tribes
To kill off
OLD PEOPLE,
When their days of hunting
And of useful work
Were over.
When they could no more
Keep up
With the strenuous life
Of their tribe,
They were quietly
Disposed of
And sometimes eaten,
Especially in times
Of food-shortage.
These folk
Were clearly SAVAGES.
They had not yet learned
To cooperate
In subduing nature,
To build a tribe
That could protect
Its members.
But . . .
In the course of time
They learned this lesson
Or were pushed off the earth
By civilized folk.

II

Yesterday
The body of a watchman
Was found in our Sound,
An old man,
A supposed suicide.
His pockets
Held only a pawn-ticket
And a bank-book,
Showing all savings withdrawn.
His days of hunting
Were over,
His days of useful labor.
He could no more keep up
With the strenuous life
Of our tribe,
So he was just disposed of,
By a newer, crueler method,
That made him
His own executioner.
The folk permitting this
Are clearly SAVAGES,
Who have not yet learned
To build a society
That can protect its members,
But
In the course of time,
We will learn it,
Or be pushed off the earth
By civilized folk.

Civilized

I

All day long
We followed the trail
On the ridges,
Looking far down
On the breaking surf
On the ribbon roads
On the quiet towns,
Till, just as evening fell,
We dropped to the valley
And found our ferry-boat
On the tossing waves
Of the bay.
Then,
As we came to the city,
There flashed
Out of the purple dusk
Of the nearing shore
Golden lights
High
On the dark heavens,
Announcing
Somebody's OATS
And Somebody's PICKLES,
And so I knew we had reached
CIVILIZATION.

II

I do not know
Whether people
Under those lights
Are happier
Than savages were;
I do not know
Whether they have learned
To be kinder;
I do not know
Whether they love Beauty,
Justice,
And little Children
More than the Red Men did
Who camped on these shores.
I do not know
Whether they are wiser
In living,
But I know
They are CIVILIZED!
For they have learned to take
The lightning of heaven
And the power of wild water
Rushing down mountains,
And make of them signs
For the selling of pickles.

The Old-Timer

"It used to be"
Said the Old Timer,
"Men left their shacks
Unlocked
All through the hills.
Far on the lone trail
You'd find a cabin
With bunks and stove
And maybe bedding,
And on the door
A sign of WELCOME,
Saying only:
'Leave things clean—in order'.
Nothing was molested
In those days
But now . . .
The civilization of cities
Has reached the hills.
It is not safe any more
To leave your cabin.
Why, somebody
Went last winter
To a ranger's shack,
And burned the bunks
And tables and chairs
For firewood,
And smashed the stove

When they left."

"Have men grown worse", I asked
"With the coming of cities"?

"Conflict among them
Has grown," he said.
"The pioneer men were equal,
COMRADES
In the war with Nature.
The shack of one
Was like the shack of another,
A sacred shelter of men
Won
From the wilderness.
But now . . .
Men are unequal.
Some of them own the land
And others wander.
Out of this comes division
And war.
No man's shelter is safe
Till all men
Have shelter;
No man's home is protected
Till all men
Have home."

The Things

When you are out of a job
And hungry,
Say to yourself:
There's NOBODY
I can blame.
It wasn't
The spite of the Boss;
It wasn't even
The Associated Industries
Attacking Labor.
It was just this:
My fellow-workers and I
Worked so well
With such fine machines,
That we made more goods
Than we can use.
No . . .
Of course we could USE it,
But we haven't wages enough
To BUY what we made.
So the extra goods
Piled up
—Suits and shoes and food—
Till now
There is surplus
And WE,
The PEOPLE,
Aren't needed any more
To make THINGS.
So . . .
It's soup-kitchens

And flop-houses for us,
Until we are needed again.
We used to dream
Ours was a world of MEN,
And THINGS were valued only
As they served MEN,
But now we see
It is a world of THINGS
And MEN are valued only
For making THINGS.
When all the things are made
That can find market,
The men are told:
"You are not wanted now."
Perhaps their wives want them,
Their children want them,
Their friends want them
But the THINGS
Don't want them
And that's what counts.
And so we wait and hunger
Because
We raised too much food.
And so we shiver because
We made too much clothing.
This is what men call
The WAGE-SYSTEM.
After a while
When we have hungered enough
The THINGS
May need us again.

The Reservoir

The Manufacturers
Have asked Congress
To let in lots of immigrants
"Because American industry
Needs a larger reservoir
Of labor."

I think that word "reservoir"
Is so expressive.
It makes me see
A great, big oblong lake,
With steep mud sides,
Like we have in the Park,
Filled
Not with water
But with men and women
And children,
All huddled together
As if they had been
POURED IN,
To wait till the tap turns,
Letting them out to a JOB.
Blond faces,
Swarthy faces,
Old, bearded faces,
Young, eager faces,
Straight, strong bodies
And crippled bodies,
All waiting
In the reservoir,

Till someone needs
A man's arm,
Or a woman's hand,
Or the clumsy fingers
Of children,
Someone, of course, with money—
The WRENCH
That alone can open the tap.

It is convenient
For the turners of the tap
To have lots of water
In the reservoir,
For it gives good pressure
When they want it.
They need not be careful
About wasting water;
They can let it run and run.
But
What will the folks do
In the reservoir
While waiting?
Will they lie as quiet
As water?
Well—
Even the quietest water
Has broken great walls
When there was too much
Pressure.

North Star at Gary

I

Have you seen
The NORTH STAR
At Gary?
Since the town was built
The stars
Of the northern sky
Have been hidden
By the red glow
Of furnaces.
Oh, Gary gave her workers
Many lights:
The hot light of steel,
The flaring light of streets,
The weary, welcome lights
Of workers' homes,
But never the white light
Of the North Star
For night by night
And year by year
The steel-mills roared
As if forever.
But just the other evening
In the steel strike,
When the officials
Claimed "operation as usual,"
The union men replied—
Pointing to the northern sky,
Where the red furnace-glow
Has paled to mist—
"We can see
The North Star
At Gary"

II

Can you see
The FREEDOM STAR
At Gary?
Since the town was built
The Star of Freedom
Has been hidden
By the fires of Gary's mills.
Judge Gary gave the people
Many lights:
Broad streets,
Neat houses,
Model schools,
Welfare workers
Who went to people's homes,
To teach them how to cook,
To wash the children's faces—
But he never gave
The WHITE LIGHT
Of FREEDOM.
Now just the other day
In the steel strike
When the crowds of men
Walked up and down the streets,
You could see at last
The FREEDOM STAR
In their faces,
Shining
Through the smoke
Of Gary.

What Monument ?

It was only
A bunch of statistics
From our State Safety Board,
Published,
Briefly read
And then forgotten,
Except by women and children
In lumber towns
To whom each man was more
Than a figure on a list.
Let us pause with them
For a moment
Before we forget;
Let us pause
In memory
Of 4000 men
Maimed last year
In the lumber industry
Of our state,
Of a hundred and twenty-eight
KILLED
By the fall of trees,
By faulty rigging,
By wornout cables,
By explosion of boilers,

By logging railroad wrecks,
Dying
Far out in the woods
From undressed wounds
As a soldier
In No Man's Land
Dies before help comes.
One hundred and twenty-eight
Times
The logging-trains came in,
Swinging
Through the firwood,
With a flat car
Bearing a body,
And a black cloth over it.
Let us pause
When the state reports come,
We who erect
Monuments
To soldiers dead in war,
Who died, we say,
To protect our homes,—
What monument shall we erect
To the men who died
To build them?

Rotten Foundations

I was planning
To build me a house
And a friend
Who is a builder
Warned me
Of the tricks of the trade.
He told me
Of ready-to-wear houses
Built in a bunch
By a cheap contractor
And apt to be just shells.
The latest trick,
They say,
Is to build full basements,
Supposed
To give solid foundation,
But because cement
Is expensive,
They make a few solid piers
While the rest of the wall,
That LOOKS solid,
Is thin cement
On naked earth.
This saves
A lot of money
For the contractor,

But as soon as the house
Begins to settle,
It's ruined.

So I said:
"What
Do you think would happen,
If some of these days
When the building trades
Strike
For higher wages,
They should arise
In the pride of their craft
And strike
For the right
To work **ONLY**
On decent, honest jobs?"

"Oh, hush," he said,
"It's bad enough
When these fellows strike
For their own good,
But if they should strike
For the good of the public
Everyone knows that's—
BOLSHEVISM."

What Is The Matter?

"We never saw so many
Jumpy people,"
Said our Labor Delegates,
Returning from Washington.
"You meet them in hotels,
On Pullman cars
And even
In halls of government.
They are afraid
To look under the bed
For fear of finding
A Bolshevik!
They are SURE
That our Labor Movement
SEETHES with Revolution,
And that they are saved
From red rebellion,
With blood running in gutters,
Only
By the LAW'S vigilance
In jailing REDS.
We told them:
'We
Are representatives of Labor.
We never saw those folks
With torch and bomb'

But they assured us,
Whispering,
We didn't know what we said.
We couldn't convince them
At all.
So at last
We wondered:
WHAT is the matter
With these folks?
Are their own hearts
So given to VIOLENCE
That they think ours are?
Are their brains
So muddled by HEADLINES
That they cannot see
Plain facts?
Or are they
Just groggy
From rich food
Of WAR-PROFITS
Poisoning their intestines?
What
Is out of order in them?
Their brains?
Their consciences?
Or their digestion?"

What In A Name?

It was a good scheme
But they called it
A bad name
And thus killed it.

I

The War Department
Started shop committees
In Rock Island Arsenal.
Last September
They reported
Remarkable improvement
In efficiency
Resulting
From those committees.
Then somebody called it
"Sovietism"
And that finished it,
For the War Department
Felt obliged to give it up.

II

In Leavenworth jail,
They tried self-government
Among prisoners,
Trying to make MEN
Out of wrecks,
Instead of wrecks out of men.

The system worked;
The discipline was better;
The prisoners almost learned
To govern themselves
Which is the first lesson
In manhood.
Then somebody called it:
"The prison SOVIET!"
And some Senators
Denounced the War Department,
So
The self-government stopped.
And the prisoners
Are caged beasts again,
Not learning any more
To be men.

III

Who was the guy that said:
"What's in a name?"
I guess he never heard
Of Soviets
Or Communists.
These names
Have magic power:
They can be used to damn
ANY good thing.

School Board Candidate

The audience asks:

"Do you think the teacher's day
Should be lengthened?"

He replies: "I
Am an AMERICAN."

We ask: "Do you believe
In the merit system?"

He answers: "The Labor Temple
Has no right

To nominate candidates."

We ask: "Will you have phones
In every school?"

He passionately shouts:

"The Central Labor Council
Is run by REDS!"

We ask: "Should teachers
Have a voice

In determining

Educational policy?"

He thunders: "The time has come
When citizens must choose

Between Americanism
And Communism."

We ask: "Should teachers
Control their own time
Outside school hours?"

And: "Should school clinics
Be increased?"

But all he answers is:

"The Bolsheviks
Have devastated Russia."

We inquire timidly:
"Should teachers be allowed
A regular representative
At all Board meetings?"

He gives but one supreme reply,
Covering, like charity,

His multitude of sins:

"I am 100 percent American!"

Thus

Are we perfectly answered,
Our ignorance enlightened
By his intelligence.

For we are just

Plain workers

While HE

Is the businessmen's candidate
To run our School Board.

We note his replies

Reverently,

And only wish

They might be heard

By everyone in town,

So that ALL might know

As WE do

Whom NOT to vote for.

The Sedition Trial

Oh, one stood facing the judge with dawn in his eyes,
And one sat quietly stroking the hand of his wife,
And one was nervous, fidgeting in his chair,
Till he caught the eye of a comrade, and smiled.
And all were worn with jail and night-long thought,
And pale with hope deferred of a world set free.

The judge sat sleek, thin-lipped and hard,
Well satisfied with the praises of the press,
Dividing by habit all humanity
Into those who conform—and criminals.
He flamed into patriot passion
On Freedom and the glory of Democracy,
On Loyalty to a country's cause.
Surely those words had meaning,
Yet he seemed a savage mumbling an unknown God.
For he hated these men's "Freedom",
And their cry: "For the Peace of the Peoples",
And their Loyalty to the world's workers.
And bitterest was his hate that they should question
The Freedom and Democracy HE gave them,
The Loyalty he and his kind demanded.
At the end, conscious of reporters:
"Fix the bail high", he said,
"Lest they escape to aid their country's enemies."

And men who built their hopes into their nation,
Who gave toil and received poverty,
Who gave high hopes in Freedom
And received jail,
Took quietly his sneers without redress.

Oh, ye who use law to murder man's faith in justice,
Ye breeders of bitterness,
Brewers of hate,
Who sit so sleekly insulting the seekers for light,
The iron yoke of despots is not so galling to men
As your oratory of Freedom!

"Not Prejudiced"

The woman juror
Sat in the ninth seat
And the questioning began.
"I know," she said
"That's these REDS
Plot MURDER,
But I'm not PREJUDICED.
I know they advocate
VIOLENCE;
I have known it
For ten years.
But you can't call it
Prejudice
Because I have a REASON
For hating them.
I would like to BLOT OUT
That organization,
But I'm not prejudiced
Against ALL its members.
Maybe some of them
Are sorry
They joined it,
And committed those crimes
And got in this fix.
I can give them

A perfectly fair trial
For I'm not prejudiced
Against THESE defendants.
—Lots of young men
Get roped
Into that organization
Without knowing
Its criminal aims.
I'd make them cut it out
By jailing them if need be
For their own good,
And if one of them
Was an ORGANIZER,
Maybe that would affect
My estimate of him.
But I expect
To rely on EVIDENCE
In convicting them
So you can't call me
PREJUDICED."

Thereupon
The judge accepted her
As a proper juror.
(Montesano Trial, January, 1920)

A Piece of Freight

Lost!
For three years in jail!
Without trial
Or indictment,
Quite forgotten
By the high officials
And the world,
John Domason,
Dalmation by birth,
And an I.W.W.,
Was discovered
At the immigration station
In Boston.
They found him
By accident
For if he ever had friends
Who cared,
They had never known
Where to inquire.
Not a single letter
Had come to him
In the three years
While he was shifted
From jail to jail
As a piece of freight,
Whose record is lost,
Is shifted.
Nobody knew

HOW
He was forgotten,
But high officials
Are busy
And smaller ones
Are careless,
And the time of the courts
Is crowded,
So,
Day dragged into day,
Week into week,
And every day
Was twenty-four hours
Of waiting;
Every week
Was seven days gone forever!
He had the luck to be found
After three years.
The assistance commissioner,
Learning of his existence,
Released him, saying:
"We shall be glad
To be rid of him."

This is what we call
"The Department
Of Justice."

The "Joy-Bringer"

In the iron cage
Of San Quentin,
They call her:
"The Joy-Bringer."
All the unhappy women,
Who live there in the shadow,
Paying some penalty
Of broken law,
Look up
When she passes.
The dazed Italian mother,
Half-frantic for her children,
Ignorant, primitive,
Who helped her husband
Abduct a young girl
And was imprisoned for it;
The middleaged woman,
Mentally deficient,
Who killed
The man that assaulted her;
All the broken waste
Tossed by society
Into this cold, steel box
To be out of the way,
To wait
Till the hand of death or time
Opens the box again——
All of them

Watch for her coming,
Look up, smile, become human
In her presence.
She is the one soul
Brought here
Not because of weakness,
But because of strength,
Marie Equi of Portland,
A woman physician,
Imprisoned
For speaking her mind
In war-time.
Even here—in the iron box—
She remains living.
She refuses
To become a piece
Of dead wreckage.
She studies medical books,
She talks with the women,
She brings to them cheer,
Healing and help,
Making them believe
Once more
That they are HUMAN,
That they are SOULS,
Instead of forgotten waste
In an iron box.

Anonymous

A letter
Came to our office,
Intended to be published
In our "Mailbag,"
It said:
"WHY
Are profiteers
Still out of jail,
While a man like Gene Debs
Is still in?"
It was signed:
"An American born and bred."

I wanted to answer him:
"The reason, my brother,
Is contained
In the way
You sign that letter:
ANONYMOUS!
If everyone
Who felt like you
Had said their thoughts
And signed them,
Had stood right up
In their own names

And given their views
In wartime,
Instead of hiding
In the general bunch
Of "Americans born and bred."
No! . . .
I've nothing against you.
How do I know
How many children you have,
Or the wife,
Or the sick mother
Or whatever it was
That bound you,
That made you unwilling
To give your name.
But if ALL of us
Had the nerve
Of our convictions,
Debs would be OUT
And the profiteers IN."

I wanted to answer him
That way
But he hadn't sent an address
For an answer!

That New Seditious Sect

It is very old
This problem of sedition.
Nearly two thousand years ago
Governor Pliny wrote
To the Emperor Trajan
Of a "new seditious sect"
That troubled the Roman Empire
With the "good news"
Of a "Kingdom of God"
Where high and low
Should be no more,
For all men should be brothers.
(A doctrine exciting to slaves,
But unapproved by emperors.)

And thus he wrote:
"Pliny to Emperor Trajan
Wishes health . . .
In the examination
Of these Christians,
I have experienced doubt
Whether to make distinction
Of those that are young
From those that are hardened,
Whether to offer pardon
If any repent,
Or whether the guilt
Of flagrant Christianity
Cannot be wiped out
Even by repentance.
Shall mere membership
Be counted a crime,
However innocent the man

May be in other matters,
Or must the crimes we hold
Against the organization,
Be proved anew
Against each individual? . . .
For informations
Pour in against multitudes
Of every age and order,
Since the contagion
Of this superstition
Spreads through cities
And villages even to farms."

Now Trajan was a wise emperor.
He answered Pliny:
"Do not go out of your way
To hunt these folk
With informers.
If any are found and convicted
Let them be executed.
If any renounce their sect,
Let them be pardoned.
But pay no attention
To anonymous accusations
For this
Is against the principles
Of my government."

Yes, it is very old
—This "Red Menace"—
But not all rulers are
As just as Trajan.

Dynamite!

Lost, strayed or stolen
Down in Chicago,
One hundred and twenty-five
thousand

BIBLES,
Belonging
To the Prison Bible Society.
The Chicago police
Are hunting them
And many theories
Are advanced.

Some think they were taken
By a patriotic squad
Of the American Legion,
Who heard that lecturer say:
"The Bible
Has DYNAMITE in it,
Enough to blow up
Our whole social order!"

But others hold
The Bibles were seized
And held incommunicado
As anti-American,
Because they were first written
In Hebrew and Greek,
And have been spread

In over a hundred
FOREIGN languages!

A third theory
Is that the Secret Service
Is examining them
As seditious literature,
Because they contain
That Bolshevik ideology:
"If a man will not work,
Neither shall he eat."

Anyway,
Whoever seized or stole them,
They should NOT
Be returned
To the Prison Bible Society.
Perhaps it was safe
To put Bibles in jails
For ordinary criminals,
Like thieves
And murderers;
But now
The jails are filled
With THINKING PEOPLE
Who should not be trusted
With BIBLES!

A Judge on Trial

They asked Judge Lindsay:
"What do you know
Of this murder?"
He replied: "What I know
Came to me in confidence
From a boy who trusted me
As Juvenile Judge."
They cried: "The LAW
Demands that you tell us."
He replied: "A greater law
Demands my silence."
They cried: "You make light
Of our court!"
"Better so", said he,
"Than to make light
Of a boy's trust."
They shouted: "Jail
Is the penalty."
"Even so," said he,
"I will keep faith
With the child."

That
Was Judge Lindsay,
Who built his whole life-work
On the children's trust,
Till they told him things
They never told their mothers,
Things

They hardly whispered
To their gangs,
Because the "Kid's Judge"
Was a Confessor,
Secret and helpful.
That was how he made
Strong lives
Out of broken ones.

No wonder
He chose jail!
What else could a man do?
Better men than he
Have chosen jail before him.
Greater men than he
Will choose jail after him.
For all of us
Come
By one path or another,
In one cause or another,
To the place where life offers
On the one hand
THREATS
From the old, old men
With their musty laws,
On the other hand
The CLAIM
Of the children

Flags

Hang flags, they cried.
"Hang crape", you said.
"The dream for which our fathers died
Is dead.

"Freedom of speech,
Of press, of thought—freedoms of which we brag—
We kill them, and above the grave of each
We plant—a flag."

Nay—but afar
The living Freedom calls the sons of men,
For she will dwell no longer where we are,
Bound by our little land again.

She claims the world.
Her feet endure no lesser resting-place.
Not till our flags—dead symbols of her past—are furled
Shall we behold her face.

To Keep The Past On Its Throne

They gave us a fine time
In New England,
Showing us all the landmarks
Of our history.
We drove out the ancient road
That Paul Revere followed,
Riding by night
To warn those early rebels
That British troops
Were coming.
We saw the steeple
Of the North Church,
Where the lantern was hung
For a signal.
And we followed
The twenty-mile track
Of that old, wild ride
That started
Our Revolution!
Out past Longfellow's home
And the Washington elm,
Where Washington took command
Of our first army,
Past weather-beaten farms
Where bullet-marks
Still showed
From that old fight.
We saw the Lexington green
Where the Minute Men met,
And the old hotel
Where they molded bullets
All that long night

Till the dawn.
We passed the houses
Of Hawthorne and Emerson
And came to the Concord Bridge
Where they made the stand
That gave us A NATION.

There, in the old stone wall,
Was an iron plate:
"Here lie
The British soldiers
That fell at this place,
They came three thousand miles
And died
To keep the past
Upon its throne."

And I thought how many men,
Age after age
And today also,
Have marched the world over
And died by millions
To keep the past on its throne,
Yet never succeeding—
For somewhere always,
By ridge or pass or ford,
In mine or forest or town,
They meet
And are swept to defeat
By the ragged handful of men
Who fight
For the FUTURE!

Patriotism

I

Some folks honestly think
That Patriotism
Means lynching Reds
To show your proper horror,
Loving your country
Too violently
To obey her laws
Of tolerance
For men whose talk you hate.
But I think Patriotism
Means giving justice
To ALL,
Even to those to whom
You fear to give it.

II

Some folks honestly think
That Patriotism
Means shutting your eyes
To mistakes of officials,
Reverencing
All little tag-ends
Of Government,
And hitting over the head
All critics.
But I think Patriotism
Means seeing mistakes quickly
And speaking your mind on them,
In the high faith
That our people

Are competent to hear
All facts and opinions,
That our country is greater
Than its temporary rulers
And can survive the loss
Of many stupid servants
Who call themselves
Government.

III

Some folks honestly think
That Patriotism
Is an emotional jamboree,
A shouting: "Thank God WE
Are not as others."
A braggart thrill
At colors in a piece of cloth,
And a license to call names
At all neighbors.
But I think Patriotism
Is a sober, life-long job,
A hard, high calling:
To build in this our land
From sea to sea
A great FREE PEOPLE,
Free from prejudice,
Free from fear,
A nation of brothers,
Owning the wealth of the land,
Sharing fairly its products,
Brothers to themselves
And to the whole wide world!

Mistakenly Dead!

The name of William Wirt
Is engraved
On bronze memorial in Akron,
Sacred to the memory
Of the dead in France,
But William Wirt himself
Is much alive,
And much annoyed
At the mistakes they make
In government records.
He claims
There are 2000 ex-soldiers,
Living and husky,
But listed officially dead
By the War Department.
He wants to start
A Club of Dead Men
For all "mistakenly dead."
I am not sure
What his club
Would have as its purpose,
But I would like to form
A Club of the Dead
For those who really died
In France and Flanders,
In icy mountains of Italy,
On sun-struck plains
Of Gallipoli,
Who stood knee-deep in mud
At midnight,

Waiting
For their last dawn;
Who lay for days
Between the lines
Tortured by thirst,
Until a merciful bullet
Brought release;
Who died in despair
In prison-camps,
Or amid groans in hospital,
Or under gray seas.
I wish the souls
Of all those flaming youths
Who died
In a war to end war,
To make earth safe
For democracy
Could unite
In a Club of Dead Men
To sit in judgment
On us living,
On our battlelines,
Still worldwide,
On our "peace councils"
That make no peace.
I wish they could remind us
What they died for,
And ask
If they too
Are "mistakenly dead"?

"Law and Order"

I read in the paper
From Mexico City:
"NO CRIME
Was committed
In this city
For the past twenty-four hours.
Not a single arrest was made
For a broken law.
Let us hoist
The WHITE BANNER,
Taking pride
In the good conduct
Of the law-abiding citizens
Of our wonderful
City of Mexico."

Then I recalled
That Mexico City
Has one million population,
Three times as large
As our Seattle.

And I wondered
When a day would pass
In Seattle
Without a single crime
Or arrest.

I recalled
The Fosdick report
About world crime,
Which said:
"America
Leads all the world
In disregard of law."

And I wondered
HOW SOON
We will have to go over
To Mexico City
"To restore
Law and Order?"

That White Race

If I were a contemplative
Hindu philosopher,
Overlooking
The wide reaches of time,
This is what I might say
About these wars:

"THAT WHITE RACE
Has been a very restless race,
Always annoying
The other races.
It runs
To the far corners of earth
To grab and to hold,
To rule and subdue.
Nevertheless,
It also
Has had its mission.
It has made swift ships
And giant engines,
It has subdued
The universe of matter
To serve mankind.
It has knit together
The peoples of earth
—Even us,
The conquered peoples—
By the rapid mail,

By the telegraph,
By the railway
And the newspaper.
It has forced upon us
With the sword
The things we were too lazy
To strive for.
It has united mankind
By the bonds of machinery
But not
By the bonds of the spirit.
For that White Race
Never cherished the soul.
Even its religion was borrowed
From us of the East
And was never followed
Seriously.
And now
That race has finished its task
And destroys itself
In a mighty suicide.
Then WE,
Of the conquered races,
Take over the earth
When the conqueror perishes.
For the sword has always
Destroyed the sword,
And the meek in the end
Inherit the earth."

Thanksgiving

I said: "I am thankful
For sunlight,
Flooding the meadows
With morning,
And for the drowsy rainfall,
Murmuring sleep to the roofs.
For starlit silence of mountains,
For noonday thunder of ocean,
For shouting of children,
For patience of mothers,
For steady labor of men.—
Thankful that these shall endure
Throughout all ages
Under all systems.

Then a mocking devil
Shrieked: "You—
With your silly prattle—
Look over the earth!
Behold despots
Exulting in power.
See where the peasants
Of Vietnam, Iran and Korea
Reach out their hands for life
But die in the flame of bombs.
See the stockmarket boom
From slaughter of children,
From torture of mothers,
From twisted bodies of men.
See, striding over the earth
Red hate, black fear
And the white lynch-madness,
Lynching not man by man,
But nation by nation.
See smug men praising God
For man's death-rattle—

Mocking your insolent prate
Of thankfulness!"

I said: "Yet there is thanks
For the urge in man
That wars forever
Against chains,
That bears forever
Life
From the pits of death.
There is thanks
For Brotherhood
That widens down generations,
Enfolding the family first
Then clan and nation
And now . . . now . . .
Breaking the bounds of nations.
Even from the white madness
We tear new birth.
For as aggression
Grows worldwide
So also
The cry of understanding
From man to man
Grows worldwide.
The people's brotherhood
Grows worldwide,
As a seed, planted in darkness,
Twists through torturing rocks,
Sending roots far
To many hidden springs
And upthrusts
To a great tree,
So also Brotherhood shall grow
A shade-tree
For the peoples.

The Christmas Story

This is the Christmas story
Of a CHILD
And a KING
And three INTELLECTUALS
And some PEASANTS.
It is a true story;
It happens all the time.

I

The CHILD was born
To a carpenter's family,
In a stranger's barn.
He brought the gifts
That children bring
To our weary earth:
Infinite love,
Infinite hope,
And a dream
In his mother's soul
Of earth made safe for babies,
A world like a big family.

II

The KING in his palace
Heard of the Child,
And the dream
Of the Human Family,
So he sent soldiers
To kill that baby.
For tyrants
Fear dreams like these
And carpenter's children
That bring them.

III

The three INTELLECTUALS
Sought very far

Over wide deserts
Of dust and sage.
They hunted
Even in the King's court.
They spent much time
And came late.
But they reached their goal
At the cradle
Of the workingman's child,
And gladly gave their treasure.

IV

The PEASANTS
Were out in the hills at night,
Watching their sheep
And talking by the fire,
When there came from the stars
A Vision
Of "Peace on Earth,
Goodwill among Men."
And, being happy about it,
They ran to the barn
To see the new babe
And promise the mother
What a brave new world
It would be
When her baby grew up.

V

And mothers still pray for it,
And despots would kill it,
And wise men seek for it
And peasants hail it:
The hope of a Human Family
Safe
For the Child.

The Turn of the Year

I

Now
Is the turn of the year
At Christmas-time.
These are the darkest days
When autumn's dead leaves,
Beaten by the rain,
Tossed by the wind,
Are rotted down at last
Into new soil
For growth that is to be.
Now is the time when the sun
Turns north again
Bringing the longed-for spring.
O, there are many days
Of winter yet to be,
The coldest of the year,
The windiest of the year,
When ice grips deep on the rivers
And the promise of spring
Seems dead.
But on every storm-lashed mountain,
To every frozen valley,
The turn of the year has come.
And this do men take
As the sign:
That, minute by measured minute,
The hours of the sun are growing.
And day by day
The darkness lessens,
And day by day
The light grows more.

II

Now
Is the turn of the age,
Earth's Christmas-time.
These are the darkest years
When old systems,
Old customs,
Old ways of thinking
Are beaten and rotted down,
Soil for an age to be.
Now is the time when hope
Turns north at last,
Leading the march of spring.
O, there are many storms
Of winter yet to be,
The coldest,
The fiercest,
The grimmest,—
For men shall die
In those blizzards,
Where ice grips deep on the stream.
But to every storm-lashed mountain,
In every frozen valley,
The turn of the age has come.
And this shall men take
As the sign:
That the sense
Of the People's Power
Is flashing from nation to nation.
And day by day
The darkness lessens,
And day by day
The light grows more.

The Young Year

I

I dreamed I saw
The Young Year
Slipping down through space,
With a chest of gifts
On his straight, young back
And hope
In his face.
And I cried: What
Have you brought to earth?
Will you give us peace?
Will you finish
All these weary wars?
Will brotherhood increase?
Then a million children cried:
"O, Year!
Have you brought us food?
We have asked six years
To give us milk,
But none of them could."
And a million mothers
Tried to ask,
But stopped,
Half-choked with sobs.
And a million men said, grimly:
"O, Year!
Have you brought us JOBS?"

II

I dreamed I saw
The Young Year
Grow pale with sudden fright.
And from his face
The smile fled,
And from his eyes the light.
He set his chest

Upon the ground
It looked so very small.
He cried:
"What is it they expect?
Have I—to do it ALL?"
And then
He squared his shoulders
And said: "I do not see
What RIGHT you have
To ask so much.
What are YOU giving ME?"
He looked around the earth
So torn
By famine, pest and shell.
"Am I
To bring you heaven?" he said
"When you have brought me—
Hell?"

III

I dreamed I saw
The Young Year
Grow old before mine eyes.
He dropped his wings,
He took his staff.
Grim will
Replaced that joyous laugh.
Both hope and fear
Had fled from him
And left him stern and wise.
He bent
Above the old year's grave
And shouldered all the load.
"Oh, I can lead you far," he said,
But YOU
Must build the road."